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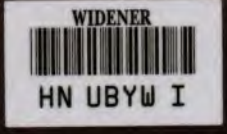

What of the Churches and Clergy

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WHAT OF THE

Churches and Clergy?

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honor, and some to dishonor."

Saint Paul.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.
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A noted clergyman recently remarked that "the Evangelical Churches are a stumbling block to the progress of true Christianity." Before endorsing this assertion to be the truth, or condemning it as utterly false, it is the duty of all to read and investigate, in order to ascertain whether the Churches are up to the standard intended by the Great Master, or the Clergy fitted for the high calling they have chosen, as regards their power, influence, and their daily life and character. To enlighten and convince is the desire and aim in bringing this book before the public.

PUBLISHERS.

PREFACE.

The Churches and the Clergy have ever been the most potent instruments for the dissemination of truth, good works, and everything tending to the upbuilding and perfecting of christian character and life, and doubtless ever will be; but as evil is everywhere associated with good, so it is found to exist in these, our principal weapons of defense against the powers of darkness and forces of evil that are everywhere at war against truth, virtue and Christianity.

In detecting and pointing out some of these imperfections, the author does not intend to say anything to injure or to cast dishonor upon the sacred cause, but rather to disclose the evils, that good may come by their correction.

AUTHOR.

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CHAPTER I.

In the earlier history of this country, and during the more remarkable historical epochs of the old world, the churches and the clergy occupied a conspicuous place; exerted a restraining, reformatory, even a governing power, alike in all matters pertaining to the welfare of state, as well as the church.

Upon all questions of religious import, temporal good, and political power, they were consulted, looked upon as their chief exponents, and were expected to utter no uncertain sound concerning them. I think that I am giving utterance to a truism when I assert that, as a body, the clergy of the present day exercise a far less potential influence in the social, moral, political and religious world, than did the clergy of bygone generations; yet, while I believe in the truth, and recog-

nize the force of this assertion, I fully concur in the sentiments expressed in the language of Cowper:

"I say the Pulpit, (in the sober sense
Of its legitimate, peculiar powers,)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of virtue's cause."

But where now do we find men occupying the pulpit, who possess the burning zeal, depth of piety, wide range of influence and reformatory power, which characterized the gospel teacher and preacher in the times of Wilberforce, Whitefield, Wesley, Luther, Edwards, and many other shining examples in the early records of the church, in this country and in Europe?

Is the gospel ministry a science, and like other sciences, subject to fixed laws? Does its power, usefulness, development, depend like the natural sciences, chemistry, philosophy, and astronomy, upon there chancing to be, now and then, raised up a man endowed with peculiar powers, keenness and depth of research, a discoverer of the secret laws

which govern, and the subtle, unseen power which animates and regulates their inherent forces? Why is it, that as the clerical force vastly increases in numbers, their influence and power is not more nearly commensurate with their numerical progress?

We are ready to concede that the days of miracle working are passed, whether by reason of a lack of the all-needed and perfect faith, or by reason of an all-wise and infinite limitation, it is not our intention, or province, to discuss.

Our purpose, at the present time, is rather to inquire into the causes of the apparent, not to say real, degeneracy of the clergy, especially as relating to the zeal manifested in their work, their personal piety, and fitness for their ministerial calling.

"Many are called, but few are chosen," is a scriptural declaration, which, perhaps, may not be very inappropriately or improperly applied to the clerical ranks of to-day. We do not look now for an ambassador of the Lord, who shall prepare his way by crying in the wilderness, or who shall gather in three

thousand in a day, in one great, pentecostal shower. But must we not look for more sincerity and singleness of purpose; more zeal and energy in the work of the clergy; more independence and moral heroism; and more thorough personal devotion and consecration to the service of their Lord and Master?

A lack of these primary requisites, is one cause of the unsuccessful ministrations, and clerical short-comings of the present age.

In the times of the great reformers, when the champions of the gospel of Christ had to fight against all forms of false religions which had become ingrafted, rooted and grounded into governmental foundations, and which were protected, sustained and controlled by royal edicts, it required a degree of pious zeal, thorough devotion, soul courage, which to-day would put to flight many of the standard bearers of the cross, cause them to yield up the fields of the world, to the forces of evil and gross superstition, and make them bow in more loyal devotion to the gods of this world, than they now do.

Then, instead of enjoying religious freedom,

no one to question the right and privilege of the clergy to preach whatever doctrine they chose, without fear or protest, they had to defy oftentimes the authority and express commands of kings and queens; suffered all manner of persecution, and even counted not life itself too dear a sacrifice for the upbuilding of Christ's cause and kingdom here on the earth.

"It is said of John Flavel, one of the most dauntless of all the nonconformist divines, that persecution only made him more zealous; and when the inhuman Oxford Act of 1665 drove him from Dartmouth, he retired to a parish five miles distant, where he twice every Sunday preached to those who dared venture to become his hearers; and he would occasionally return by stealth to Dartmouth, to edify and console his dejected flock, by his ministrations in their houses. He once went to Exeter, where many of the inhabitants prevailed on him to preach to them in a wood, about three miles from that city, but he had scarcely begun his sermon before the meeting was interrupted by a number of his enemies,

from whom he narrowly escaped, while several of his hearers were arrested, and heavily fined. The rest, not yet discouraged, followed the zealous preacher to another wood, where they were not molested." No little moral heroism was demanded to enable the men of those perilous times to stand up for the truth, when, by giving utterance to it, they were dragged from the pulpit, and summarily cast into prison, there to remain, as was the case in many instances, for a score or more of years. Flavel's career was simply illustrative of numbers of others, who experienced the same hardships, encountered the same opposition, and overcame the same obstacles.

The clergy of the present day surely ought to accomplish far greater results for good, seeing that they have untramelled liberty in preaching the gospel, without fear of offending lords, and potentates, and subjecting themselves to all manner of accusation, as was the case with the most distinguished divines of olden times.

Mr Symmons, an ejected minister, gives the following account of the accusations brought

against him by Parliament, before whom he was summoned:

"When I preached against treason, rebellion, and disobedience, then they said no question but I meant Parliament; and afterwards when I preached against lying, slandering, and malice, this, they said, was against Parliament, too! and got me to be sent for again by a pursuviant about the same. Nay, when I did but quote those words of our Saviour, "wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth unto death, and many go therein," this, they said, was against Parliament, because the major part of the people in those parts, were for the same. When I quoted that passage in the 120th Psalm, where David says that, "he was for peace, but others were for war; when he spake of that, they made ready for battle," this, they said, was for the king, and against Parliament. When I preached against vain-glory, upon these words of our Saviour, "I seek not the praise of men," they said I preached against a particular member, when I protest I never thought of him all the while I was upon that

subject (that I know of) save only when I prayed for my enemies."

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, some of the divines were bold enough in declaring the truths of the gospel, to call forth her displeasure, as when one of them was discoursing in her presence, and gave utterance to sentiments and doctrines which were unacceptable to her, she shouted to him from her seat, "to retire from that ungodly digression, and return to his text." This moral heroism; this boldness in declaring the truth; this addressing the teachings of scripture to the consciences of men, which so largely characterized the ancient ministry, contributed greatly to its influence, and power in the world; the want of which has tended, and still tends, to weaken the influence of the clergy of this age. The tendency now is, to temper and tone the truths and doctrines, to suit circumstances; adapt them to the various views, mental constitutions, and religious propensities, or predispositions, of different communities, congregations, and classes of people. Those most eminent

divines, who, a century or half a century ago, created the most wide spread and profoundest sensation, throughout the christian world, and who were most successful in their ministration, were those who preached Christ and him crucified, holding him up to the world, as the light, hope, and glory of it, and as the pattern to be followed. The fundamental truths and doctrines of scripture, were all sufficient for them, and their purpose.. The clergy of to-day seem to have gone after other gods, and lost sight of their great and divine leader; the Prince of Peace, their great example; and ignored almost the power of him, in whom is all power, and through whom victory is finally to be obtained. How many of the pulpits at the present time are substituting science for the bible? The clergy seem to be vieing with each other in seeking to popularize their efforts, by publicly advertising some novel subject; announcing it as a bait for the public bite; who endeavor to put into their popular discourses a little sprinkling of scriptural truth, in order to give them, as it were, their spiritual leaven.

A writer says "that the very air in these days is getting full of skeptical questionings. Possibly. If so, let us know it; and know how to meet them."

Mr. Spurgeon in a recent sermon gives utterance to a kindred declaration when he says: "There is very much rubbish about, brethren; and therefore, for the present distress, if every christian minister were to keep to preaching Christ and him crucified, and nothing else, I think he would do well; and if every Christian man were to just keep to the plain truths of scripture, and have them worked into his own soul by the Holy Spirit, and then speak them out with power, and live for soul winning, and care for nothing else, he would do well."

We have stated that a lack of sincerity, zeal and personal sacrifice, is one cause of unsuccessful ministration at the present time, and now we ask the question, where are the clergymen who would do as Bunyan, Whitefield, and men of their times did? Who among them would now get up at sunrise and go round among the lowest classes, those

engaged in the most menial service, call them together, and continue hour after hour in laboring to bring them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus? Who among them now, would labor from early daylight till darkness, out in the fields, by-ways, and among the lowliest, without compensation beyond a bare subsistence?

Who now would do as Fletcher, a vicar of the Church of England, did? "His parishioners were principally engaged in the collieries and iron works, and their character was such as, to the reproach of England, it generally is, wherever mines or manufactures have brought together a crowded population. Fletcher set about zealously to reform them, and devoted not only his life, but his whole fortune in doing good. When some of his remote parishioners excused themselves for not attending the morning service, by pleading that they did not awake early enough to get their families ready, for some months he set out every Sunday morning at five o'clock with a bell in his hand, and went round the most distant parts of his parish,to call up the

people. Whenever hearers could be collected together in the surrounding country, within ten or fifteen miles, he went thither to preach to them in the week days, though he seldom got home before one or two in the morning.

At first, the rabble of his hearers resented the manner in which he ventured to reprove and exhort them, rude and brutal as they were, till at length his church, which at first had been so scantily attended, that he was discouraged as well as mortified by the smallness of his congregation, began to overflow. He continued in his arduous work, up to almost the day of his death, though repeatedly urged to cease his labors, in order to save his life."

Who now among them would be content to do as did Travers, who preached without any emolument? A gentleman meeting him some time after he first preached in his new field, asked him what he had for supplying the pulpit; to which he readily answered, that he had very much, "for," said he, "I never preached to a more attentive audience in my life." "But," said the gentleman, "what do they pay you?" He replied that he had

been invited to dinner twice or three times by Sir J. Harvey, and being told that was no maintenance, "Sir," said Mr Travers, "I thank God, and you, that I may preach the gospel; I have dined to day, and God will provide for to-morrow."

True it may be, that just this kind of sacrifice is not called for now, nor perhaps would it be commendable to exercise it; but were it demanded by any possible necessity, we fear that not one in the whole ranks of the clergy could be found who would exercise it. The majority of ministers now-a-days quite studiously ignore the lower classes, even those among the common laborers, who are respectable, intelligent, and capable of receiving great benefit from clerical visitation, and helps, and who in turn are amply able to do good to others, and advance the cause which should be common to all, as it was intended. How many ministers look to circumstances, instead of the man, and measure him by the size and depth of his purse or the height of his social position, rather than by any noble, redeeming qualities, of mind and heart. As a

simple illustration, we will make mention of an honest, industrious, middle aged man; an attendant quite regular at one of our orthodox churches, who followed the avocation of a bookeeper. His pastor, a sound orthodox clergyman, of considerable reputation as a preacher, and a christian, thorough going pastor, was never known to speak to this member of his flock; would never notice him on the street, though he passed him betimes every day almost. The young man noticed the indifference of his pastor, and remarked about it to his friends. Suddenly the young man's circumstances were reported to have changed, and he had come into possession of a fortune of a hundred or two thousands of dollars. The following day, as his pastor was walking up the street past his place of business, he saw the young man on the opposite side of the street, who had so suddenly become richly endowed with the riches of this world, and he rushed over to him, cordially grasped him by the hand, congratulated him on his good fortune, was very glad to see him, and hoped to see more of him in future.

But, alas! the report of the man's fortune proved to have been a cruel hoax. The bookeeper never had the pleasure of grasping his expected fortune, nor the hand of his pastor again. That pastor's sudden friendship was not for the man, but for the anticipated dollar.

Instead then, of the clergy being willing to deny themselves; to come down to the common walks and needs of the every day practical life of the masses; to take hold and strive to lift up the lowly, the poor and unfortunate; to labor zealously in the many uninviting fields, which call loudly for deliverance from the evils that envelope them; instead of this, they are growing more and more unused to self sacrifice; less and less inclined to perform the full measure of the common duties pertaining to their office, while their demands for remuneration are yearly growing more and more exorbitant.

Now, while their labors are vastly curtailed from what they were in the ministry of twenty-five or fifty years ago, the more the clerical brethren seem to cry out against the

arduous work, laborious burdens, that are allotted to them. As the duties to be performed, work to be accomplished, lessens, so in like proportion, does their demand for salary increase.

Years ago it was the fashion, and was considered an important part of a preacher's duty, to act as a pastor over his people; call upon them, and talk with them upon matters pertaining to the kingdom. I remember that in my youth, (and I am not very old now) the ministers were looked upon as beings almost divine, and almost incapable of sin, being clothed seemingly with righteousness, as with a garment; and when our pastor called to make a pastoral visit, it seemed as if in the highest sense of the word, he was a divinely appointed representative of the Lord, and enjoyed his love and favor, far above common people. In those days the pastors used to read the scriptures, pray with the people of their charge as they called from house to house, and they were generally actuated by a missionary, christian spirit.

Ministers are now plenty, but pastors, in

the above sense, are *non est.* It is very rarely now that pastors call at all upon members of their congregation, or if at all, the occasions are amazing infrequent—just about as infrequent as funerals and marriages in the families of their flock. Most any pastor would not regard it excusable in him to neglect the former; while the latter festival would offer more or less inducement to him, in anticipation of immediate pecuniary reward.

Human nature is very much the same among all classes and conditions of society, and the clergy are growing more and more *human* every day. There was a time, and that not many years ago, when at least a good proportion of the ministers would regard it their religious duty to accept a call to preach in certain places, even if they were uninviting, by reason of feeble influence and financial weakness, but now, as a body, they don't regard it a providential call to any place unless it happens to be to a magnificent and costly church, with all the modern adornments; with a wealthy society to maintain it in style, who are also able to give them an

abundant salary, sufficient to support their families in luxury and ease.

When ministers are settled over such churches, how often it is the case, that they are expected to make their preaching popular, and edifying, whether or not it is effectual in saving souls. Instead of working the year around, as day laborers, doctors, lawyers do; they would think themselves ill used, if they were not granted a generous vacation in which to roam around the country, not to say anything about a six months tour in Europe.

It is really a pitiable sight to see the physical wrecks among the younger members of the clerical fraternity, who, after a few years of ministerial labor, are in a condition to demand hired help to shoulder a portion of their weighty responsibilities. If many of them would confine themselves to their own legitimate business more of the time, and let other business and traffic, which is entirely foreign to their profession, alone, an associate pastor would not be so imperatively demanded.

A minister cannot do justice to his people, if he has got to devote a good share of his time to the care and training of his famous blooded herd of fleet horses. If they are really indispensable appurtenances to a useful and successful pastorate, then let every church see to it that hereafter a noble stud of horses, with a first-class groom and trainer, is provided, and an associate pastor is appointed, to have watch and care over this portion of church property and pastoral flock. So far as our observation has extended, clergymen who worship horses so much don't find quite so much time as they might in which to worship their Master, and to call upon the members of their churches, who may stand in need of their sympathy.

As an illustration, we will make mention of an army chaplain, well known to us, who had considerable admiration for horses—far more than he had for the duties of his official position, and who had become, as he thought, quite an adept in the horse trade. He preached just twice to his regimental flock, after which he could be seen on Sun-

days forcing his steed over the parade ground, in company with those from whom more moral proceedings were not expected. The soldiers who were the subjects of his brief ministrations soon lost their reverence for him, and instead of addressing him as Chaplain, they were not slow in hurling at him epithets of a not very endearing or sacred character. The sick and dying soldiers in the hospital were not ministered unto by him, but in their hour of extremity the horses were being tenderly cared for, or else they were receiving forcible and painful impressions from the long, shining spurs, which continually adorned his heels. His success in trading in horseflesh did not long continue, and his final triumph in that direction was the confiscation of a government mule, while his regiment was on the march to battle, and which mule he persisted in riding on to the field where the opposing forces were drawn up in line of battle. The Chaplain was warned off the field by several officers, being told that firing would soon commence, and it would be dangerous for both him and his

mule. The battle, as the officers assured him it would, soon opened, and while the parson did not seem to have any comprehension of the danger, the superior intelligence of his mule was not long in divining it, and he took in the whole situation at a glance, turned square around on his heels, kicked high up in the air, landed his pretended owner in the dust beneath his feet, and ran in hot haste from the field of carnage; while the Chaplain, learning wisdom from his newly found instructor, followed the retreating jackass, at his greatest possible speed.

Thus ended the ministry of this man, who once was settled over a flourishing church in the heart of New England.

Ministers, like any other horse jockeys who will worship the beast, must be expected to neglect their Master's work, and cease to worship Him as they ought; and such clergymen will do well to remember that the more thought and time they devote to their pet idols, the more their Master's cause inevitably suffers.

Christ was not ashamed to ride about on

his mission of mercy and redeeming love mounted on an ass, and he even entered Jerusalem in glorious triumph, on the same unpretentious beast. Where now is the clerical gentleman who would ride about the streets of any of our populous cities, mounted on the same animal, if he knew by so doing he could save and redeem the whole city? Alas! I fear that the ass would be riderless, and the inhabitants of the city would continue to revel in unrighteousness.

Something needs to be done to furnish the pulpits with more robust men, who have greater powers of endurance than the majority of the clergy do, but whether fast horses are the best things for this purpose, is perhaps an open question. Theological schools are doubtless needed, but what is needed quite as much is a clerical gymnasium connected with them, where as much attention shall be paid to the development of their physical powers as there is to their theological training and spiritual development.

A minister who is all the time obliged to contend against physical infirmities, whose

soul is continually in imminent danger of separation from the body, is never very successful. It is painful for a congregation to sit, Sunday after Sunday, and witness the pitiable warfare between mind and matter; and while these ministers are to be pitied, I think that they ought sometimes to pity the people, and for their own sakes, as well as the people's, stop preaching. The pulpit now demands, more than ever, men who are liberally endowed with the highest type of moral heroism, the purest piety, the most thorough and loyal devotion to the Master's cause, boldness and independence of views, and the needed physical strength to enable them to thoroughly discharge their duty.

CHAPTER II.

THE clergy also need to adapt their preaching to the masses, which are the common people. Even Martin Luther, as long ago as his time, was particularly severe against, and denounced all preachers "that aimed at sublimity, difficulty, and eloquence, and neglecting the care of the poor, sought their own praise and honor, and to please here and there a person of consequence. When I stand in the pulpit," says he, "I imagine the people before me to be all blocks; and when I preach, I sink myself deeply down, and I regard neither doctors, or masters, of which there are in the church about forty, but I have an eye to the multitude of young people, children and servants, of which there are more than two thousand. I preach to them and direct my discourses to those who

have need of them. When one preaches upon any article, he must first distinguish it, then define, describe, and show what it is; he must strengthen it; he must explain it by examples; he must adorn it by similitudes; and produce sentences from scripture to prove and lastly, he must admonish, and rouse the indolent, correct the disobedient, and reprove the authors of false doctrines."

Such were the sensible views of one of the most distinguished and successful preachers of the old world, centuries ago.

There are some people in every congregation who are doubtless best reached by appealing to their intellects, but they are vastly in the minority. But ministers who choose to appeal altogether to this class, should strive to be original, as well as popular, that they may not be served as was one reverend doctor, who was what is usually called a popular preacher. His reputation had not been acquired by his drawing largely on his own stores of knowledge and eloquence, but by the skill with which he had appropriated the thoughts and language of the great

divines who had gone before him. Those who compose a fashionable audience generally are not very deeply read in pulpit lore, and accordingly with such hearers he passed for a writer of great erudition and pathos, but as crimes will out with themselves, so it happened that the reverend doctor was one day detected in his larcenies.

One Sunday as he was beginning to delight the people of his metropolis, a grave old gentleman seated himself close to the pulpit, and listened with profound attention. The doctor had scarcely finished his third sentence, before the old gentleman muttered, loud enough to be heard by those near, "that's Sherlock." The doctor frowned, but went on. He had proceeded but a little farther, when his tormenting interruptor broke out with, "That's Tillotson." The doctor bit his lips, and paused again; but again thought it better to pursue the thread of his discourse. A third exclamation of, "That's Blair," was, however, too much, and completely deprived the reverend of his patience. Leaning over the pulpit, "Fellow," he cried, if you do not

hold your tongue, you shall be turned out." without altering a muscle of his countenance, the grave old gentleman lifted up his head, and looking the doctor in the face, retorted, " that's his own."

In these times, when there is so much effort to popularize preaching by substituting subjects not of scriptural origin, the anecdote of Boileau and Louis XIV may not be inappropriate in its application. When M le Tourneau preached the Lent sermons at St. Benoit, in Paris, in the room of Father Quesnal, who had been obliged to abscond, Louis XIV inquired of Boileau if he knew of a preacher called M le Tourneau, whom everybody was running after. " Sire," replied the poet, " your majesty knows that people always run after novelties; this man preaches the gospel."

Apropos to Boileau's remarks as to the novelty of preaching the gospel, is the candid confession of a preacher at Mols, near Antwerp, who, in a sermon delivered to an audience wholly of his own order, observed,

"We are worse than Judas; he sold and delivered his Master; we sell him to you, but deliver him not."

The gospel that Paul preached is the only gospel that can be preached, which shall result in the accomplishment of the divine mission of the Word, viz: the redemption of the world.

Great scholastic and oratorical efforts, upon scientific and abstruse subjects, which have other foundations than those of the bible, may edify, instruct and please the intellectual natures of men; but so far as having any special influence over their sinful natures, or contributing to spiritual development, and soul-culture, they are not of much account; are as seed sown whose germ is blasted, so that they cannot take root.

Let the clergy declare with boldness, and without fear or favor, the plain, fundamental, practical truths of the bible, irrespective of persons, or their time honored preferences. If persons of wealth, of high social positions, of uncommon intelligence, by their deeds

merit the censure of the pulpit, they should receive it as readily, and as thoroughly, as the hod carrier or blacksmith.

One difficulty, however, a minister labors under, in attempting to reach the so-called higher class of people through his preaching, however plain, practical and well directed his efforts may be; and that is, that such persons never believe any remark of criticism is intended for them. They hear, but make the application for somebody else, and this they enjoy exceedingly.

There are many aggravating cases of this kind, where a minister would be excusable in dealing in personalities, as they used to be in olden times, or as did Dr. Williamson, who had a violent quarrel with one of his parishioners by the name of Hardy, who showed considerable resentment. On the following Sunday, the Doctor preached from this text, which he pronounced with unusual emphasis, and with a significant look at Mr. Hardy, who was present: "There is no fool like the fool Hardy."

The boldness, independence and firmness

of Rowland Hill would not be out of place now, in many congregations. It is said of him that once when preaching at Wapping, to a congregation composed chiefly of seafaring men, and fisher-women, he greatly astonished his hearers by commencing his sermon with these words: I come to preach to great sinners; notorious sinners; yea, to Wapping sinners." Doubtless he could find wapping sinners, in every congregation, at the present time. Now and then, it would be refreshing to have a minister give an occasional wholesome and much needed reproof, to members of his audience, whose conduct in church is both annoying to preacher and hearer, as Hill used to in his day.

It is said of him, that he was greatly disturbed when the attention of his hearers was directed from what he was saying by noise in any part of the church. When preaching before an immense audience, while in the middle of his sermon, he was disturbed by a great commotion in one of the galleries, and looking in that direction, he exclaimed,

"What's the matter there? The devil seems to have got among you." A plain, country-looking man jumped to his feet and replied, "No sir, it ar'nt the devil as is doing it; its a lady wot's fainted, and she's a fat 'un sir, as don't seem likely to come to again in a hurry." "O, that's it, is it?" observed Mr. Hill, drawing his hand across his face, "then I beg the lady's pardon, and the devil's too."

The boldness of Swift, who was no respecter of persons when dealing out merited reproofs, would now be of good service. Being called upon to preach an assize sermon, he was particularly severe upon the lawyers for pleading against their consciences. After dinner, a youthful limb of the law said some things that were rather severe against the clergy, and expressed his belief that were the devil to die, a parson might readily be found who would preach his funeral sermon. "Yes," said Swift, "I would, and would give the devil his due, as I did his children this morning."

In those days, the reproofs and discipline

emanating from the pulpits, were perhaps excessive, and in bad taste, such as would be altogether intolerant now; but the question is, are they not deficient in these later times?

The morale of the clergy is one potent reason for the degenerating power of the ministry. There is no possible use for a minister to attempt to preach to others about their sinfulness, their pressing need of repentance and salvation, while he himself is rioting in sin. He has got to be a pattern of goodness and uprightness, before he has any right to expect that his hearers will be influenced for good by anything that he may do, or say.

He may ascend the pulpit on the Sabbath, put on his outward garb of righteousness, pretend to be endowed with unction from on high, pray like a saint, and preach like an apostle, and then go round on a week day driving a sharp bargain at a horse trade, ignoring the honest day laborer of his flock, and keeping company with, and cordially grasping the hand of the wealthy gambler or rumseller; if he does these and similar things, he has no right

to expect that his ministry will improve the morale of the city in which he labors, and he need not be at all disappointed if, when the seals of his ministry, and the stars in his crown of rejoicing, are counted in that great day of settling up and balancing accounts, his packs of seals, and catalogue of stars, are pretty quickly disposed of, even if the crown itself is not found wanting.

It is needless, and worse than useless, to recall and enumerate the long list of clerical criminalities, which from time to time have filled the columns of the public press; for it is to be remembered that ministers are human, and are liable to fall into temptation as do other men; and like every body else they may be and doubtless are, more or less excusable.

But there is a painful impression nevertheless, and with good foundation, that the pulpit does really and sadly lack purity, virtue and piety. Were it not so, the great pulpit scandals which are agitating and engrossing the attention of the public mind

at the present time, would hardly have been possible.

It is however to be said in extenuation of the clergy, that in the majority of cases, the charges brought aganist them are very greatly and grossly magnified by the public, and it is vastly more prompt to condemn, and infinitely slower to forgive and over look clerical faults of a trivial nature, than it is to free other people from the stigma of the foulest and greatest of crimes. Both the press and the public forever manifest a prurient curiosity to pry into all social secrets, and cater to the depraved tastes of the people, by making as public as possible what it would be far better to have buried beyond resurrection. Mere rumors concerning clerical sins especially, often are calculated to do nearly as much harm, and far more injustice, as a matter of course, than would the actual transgression. The press and the public do the pastors and churches great injustice oftentimes, by setting themselves up before the world as judges prejudging their

case, and heralding their premature decisions before the world. But one thing is certain, viz: that there seems to be a growing necessity for the exercise of stricter censorship over the pulpit, so that it shall not be quite so easy for aspirants of doubtful character and influence to gain official admission.

It need not, and should not, be taken as *prima facie* evidence that a theological student is all right morally, in view of his theological training. There are wolves in sheep's clothing among them, before and after they reach the pulpit ranks, and a rigid and thorough investigation into their antecedents and moral status should be held, before they are allowed to preach the gospel to others. They will be known and read of all men for the evil they do, as surely, and more so, than for the good they do, for false teachings and lies spread abroad o'er the world much more rapidly than do truth and wise instruction.

Ministers cannot worship God and Mammon with any more freedom than other people. Neither can they take any more license than people in the common walks of life, nor

can they nearly as much, without receiving a death blow to their power for good.

One of the most important duties of the clergy is to look well to their character, and to guard their moral and christian reputation with zealous care. The advice of Wesley to a lay preacher should now be heeded by all of the clergy, viz: "Visit all you can from house to house, but avoid all familiarity with women; this is deadly poison, both to them and to you. You cannot be too wary in this respect."

Women, by their peculiarly sensitive, sympathetic and highly emotional natures, are frequently misled thereby, into unnatural states of mind, and into unwarrantable expressions of regard for the clerical fraternity, and it is by the almost insane demonstrations of their love and affection that the minister is frequently overcome by temptation.

Women would do well to bear in mind that the clergy are not all divine, and that they have human natures as well as other people; and the events which have transpired and are now transpiring, ought to be sufficient to

convince them that the clergy are liable, like other people, to fall into temptation.

As a safeguard against the wiles of the more unstable and less sensible women, every minister ought to secure unto himself a wife, a good, strong-minded, intelligent woman, who shall anchor him to virtue, sobriety, goodness and truth, and enable him to discharge his duty, as a steward of God, with fidelity and honesty.

Ministers not unfrequently in taking unto themselves a wife, get as it were a mill-stone tied to their necks, by reason of the eternal unfitness of their wives to themselves and their ministerial calling, and hence ministers frequently are obliged to suffer in silence the sins which ought to be laid where they properly belong, on the wife's shoulders.

Out of a due sense of justice we must admit the reverse of all this to be true, and give all due credit to the ministers' wives who have to bear the burden of their husbands' sins.

It will not do for any minister to be a respecter of persons when calling upon the

various members of his congregation, especially the female portion of it, and more especially the unmarried women, for when he is given to showing any partiality to this suspicious and susceptible class, he would do well to soon anticipate the day of his doom.

When we fully appreciate all the crooked sticks, human shoals and quicksands, that beset the paths of the ministerial wanderers, it is not very strange that now and then a frail barque among them does run aground, and suffer wreck upon some of the hidden breakers. If they worship the dollar, court the society and influence of men of station and fortune, to the exclusion of the common classes in their congregations, they cannot count largely upon either human or divine sympathy in their work.

There is still another cause why the work of the ministry is less fruitful and powerful in its results than formerly, and that is that the Young Men's Christian Associations throughout the country, and the various outside missionary enterprises of the churches

have largely weakened and detracted from the work of the church proper.

The christian enthusiasm and life of the churches have thus been diverted from their old fields and time honored channels, and so these various associations and enterprises have received the credit of doing and accomplishing what the churches did, or were expected to, in times past.

The question may well be raised, whether or not the same personal effort, christian zeal and self denial which these young men and women, the life and sinews of the churches, exercise in their work outside of their several churches, was exercised by them in the church, would not result in their enlarging and upbuilding, and be the means of accomplishing far more good, and have greater success in winning souls, and bringing them to the knowledge of the truth, than they now do.

The middle aged men and women who thus spend a greater portion of their time and energies in these outside fields of labor, cannot be of nearly so much service in the

churches as they otherwise would, hence the churches suffer for the want of their much needed help.

As these new christian enterprises multiply, new demands are constantly created for financial assistance, and the result is that the churches are crippled in this respect; and so it is that most of the churches, christian associations, and various missionary enterprises, are struggling to maintain their organization under a burden of debt which bespeaks a financial panic among them, if not actual bankruptcy.

The policy of multiplying christian enterprises, to be carried on by such painful efforts, and under such doubtful auspices, is highly questionable, for the good they do is not much in excess of the evils they give rise to, in view of the obloquy and discredit that are heaped upon them on account of their being objects of charity, which demand persistent and most importunate begging.

Rather than to have the churches thus impoverished for want of men and means to carry on their legitimate work, and more

fully to accomplish their true mission in the world, and to be in addition, disgraced by so many poverty stricken offspring, better by far lessen, instead of increase the christian organizations, and by concentration, and centralization of labor as well as finances, enable the churches themselves to gain strength in men and means, to do the work which is rightfully expected and demanded of them.

The theories here advanced relative to the practical workings and results of the Young Men's Christian Associations, I well know will be decidedly unpopular, so far as the people who compose these organizations are concerned; but I speak from repeated observations of their work and operations, and the results attending them, and I venture to assert, that if the clergy as a body would give an honest, independent expression of their candid opinions touching these matters, they would utter kindred sentiments, and declare them actual hindrances to them, and their work, rather than helps.

In circles of business and trade of all kinds, the more one branch of it is divided and sub-

divided, the less profitable it becomes, until it is finally ruined by excessive competition, and a lack of public patronage. It is very much so with the churches and christian enterprises, which are multiplying, striving for sucess far beyond their power to accomplish; competing for public sympathy, patronage, and financial aid, until now many of them are almost moribund, financially and spiritually. It ought not so to be, but is it not the inevitable tendency of the times?

CHAPTER III.

It costs so much to maintain the outward forms of religion, that christianity, to the poor man, has become an expensive virtue.

Many of the church edifices have been erected at such cost as to necessitate a high rate of pew rental, far beyond the means of the masses, and in consequence the common working classes have come to look upon church privileges as costly ones that they can ill afford, and it is not all idle pretense on their part, either. There is far more truth than fiction in their views touching this matter. It is an evil that has been growing in our churches for a long time, and now and then a church has acknowledged the evil and set about to reform it. It does not do away altogether with the difficulty to assign, as some churches do, a few pews in the galleries,

side aisles, and in the rear of the church, to the poorer classes, the working men and women of the congregation. Human nature is wonderfully identical, and respect must be shown it in one class, as well as another.

Invidious distinctions may be made among people, so far as relates to the affairs and conditions of every day, practical life, but caste in religious organizations is out of place, an offense to God and christianity.

Even a sable tenant of one of the southern plantations had a glimmering sense of these matters, as expressed during the following colloquy with his master. It happened one evening that the slaveholder had a streak of good and merciful feeling come over him, when he asked Moses if he did not want to become a christian. "Yah! Yah! me become a christian? Me? Its massa ebery Sunday, and its massa ebery day in de week; me be a christian? O massa, consistency am a jewel."

A writer has wisely remarked that dollars and sense do not necessarily travel together, and how often do we see the seeming incom-

patibility between them. The Lord Mayor of London made a pertinent pun at a public dinner recently, apropos of certain recent bestowals of titles, saying "that he thought a man of *a*bility ought to rank above a man of *no*bility." This pun admits of a wide range of application, both in affairs of church and state.

In a word, costliness of church privileges, the growing disposition to magnify the office of the dollar, and to court its influence, is a reason for the decline of church growth and power.

Fashion is another bane of the churches of to-day. There is the most vulgar ostentation creeping into all of our churches, so that they are really becoming to be regarded by the more refined and intelligent class as places for the exhibition of silks and satins, purple robes and fine linen, and all the novelties of the dry, fancy goods and millinery trade; in short, the great advertising marts for the merchants who deal in the fineries of dress.

To come out the first one, at the earliest

dawn of every new season, clothed in the latest freak or frivolity of style, is the ambition of a good proportion of the audiences of many city churches, and the common people look upon these expensive wardrobes as they do the first early vegetables that appear in the market, as beyond their means of enjoyment. There is one source of consolation to the poorer masses, and it is that as early vegetables are very apt to be immature, green, and rotten at the core, so the same immaturity, unsoundness, greenness, general defectiveness of mind and heart are accredited to these butterflies of fashion, by all the intelligence and sober sense of every congregation and the world at large. Nature shows no deference for the devotees of fashion; she provides no reserved seats for the rich and dainty. One has vulgarly remarked that "when there is ice on the pavement they sit where they can."

One of the greatest lights of the American pulpit has ventured the assertion that were the wealth and fashion to be taken out of the churches, they would be a stench in the

nostrils of the community. This statement is according to wealth and fashion almost unlimited sway; complete, controlling power; and doubtless is almost too sweeping in its admissions and condemnations, but it is not so absurd as it might appear to the casual reader.

As Christ overthrew the seats of the money changers in the Jewish temple, so might he serve the wealth and fashion in the temples now devoted to his praise and worship, were he to appear among them.

These evils call loudly for reform, and we are glad to see a movement in some quarters to that effect. More humility, and plain, practical christianity, are demanded in our churches, and far less display and social ostracism.

Unless there is a change for the better in these respects, the churches will inevitably repel, rather than attract the masses, which to draw in and redeem, was the primary intent of all christian spirit and enterprise, and the whole purport of the mission of Christ and his gospel.

Why is it, that of all christian denominations, the Methodists have made the most rapid advances in growth of numbers, as well as in christian work, and in everything that pertains to a useful, and successful ministry? Is it because as a class, or religious sect, they are more intelligent; characterized by more general ability? I am quite sure that the general public would be quite disinclined to accord them that distinguished honor. Is it because they are more richly endowed with means to carry on their religious enterprises to a successful issue? I think that the public would give a negative answer to this question. Is it because of any special power which wealth or fashion exerts? As a sect, they have been in years past more noted for their plainness and sense in dress than any other protestant religious body.

The great secret of their success lies unquestionably, in the unity of purpose and sentiment, the social equality, christian zeal and earnestness, by which they have ever been actuated, from the days of John Wesley

down to the present time. It is the successful and aggressive church of our times, and as it has in the past, so is it destined in the future to accomplish an important mission in the world, in the way of its salvation.

The growth of Catholicism is not altogether due to priestly power and commanding authority, but it is greatly enhanced by the oneness of sentiment and purpose, the total lack of all social barriers and exclusion. All of their religious rites and ceremonies are observed with punctuality, soul devotion and zealous faithfulness, which puts to shame the worship of the Protestant world. All their church affairs are regulated as by clock work, and move on without any apparent hindrance or friction, and by virtue of system, and close attention to matters of details, and by a code of rigid, inexorable discipline, the Catholic church has aggregated unto itself immense power, and secured for itself almost unlimited growth and expansion.

Next to the Catholics and Methodists, the Baptists rank as the growing religious sect. The same rules, and plans of action which

govern the growth of the Methodists, are recognized by them, that is to say, the social element is liberally cultivated; there is mutual interchange of thought and sentiment, and to a very pleasant degree, oneness of purpose, and great concert of action. They are even accused of being clannish, but a little more of such clannishness is to be desired in most churches of other denominations, in order to render them attractive to the masses who attend, and more especially to draw in outsiders. Close communion is their chief bigotry. How strange it is that in this enlightened age mankind will stand up for a mere formality of belief, just as though their hope of heaven depended upon rigid adherence to a bigoted idea. It is not at all probable that there will be a nice little nook or corner set apart in heaven for them to commune all by themselves, and how then will they manage it? What surety have they, that they will have a Baptist God to worship? What if a great majority of the angelic host should not be of the Baptist persuasion?

A day or two since, on glancing at the contents of a religious journal, there appeared an article from a Baptist clergyman, in which he said that he had handed in his resignation as pastor of a certain church, because he could not conscientiously remain settled over a church which allowed, or in any way tolerated open communion. How will that minister feel when he gets into the New Jerusalem, and witnesses the grand and glorious communion of the saints with each other? Suppose he will want to stroll around the streets of the celestial city all alone, for fear that he may accidentally stumble on to some one whom he deemed unworthy of communing with the saints, the Baptist saints, while in the flesh? There is nothing perhaps that is objectionable in an ordinarily tender conscience, but that minister's conscience I do not believe is entirely void of offense toward God.

The clergy have not that controlling influence over the masses that they formerly had, because of the general intelligence and independence of views which now obtain. Mankind are more generally investigating scrip-

tural truths for themselves, and take less for granted of that which is propounded from the pulpit.

The pulpit to-day ought to be more powerful than ever before, by virtue of the prevailing intelligence, liberality of views and freedom of action, which are growing more and more predominant among all christian denominations.

Who can compute the vast amount of time and thought that the clergy have in times past devoted to the establishment of the old creeds and dogmas, which so shrouded the would-be believer in a maze of doubt and mystery?

How many were blinded beyond hope of recovery, by trying to solve those scriptural enigmas? A fixed belief in each and every article of the creed was regarded as necessary to constitute a christian, as belief and trust in Christ himself.

As general intelligence obtains, and a growing disposition is manifested for personal investigation of bible truths and doctrines, the less is said about creeds, and one after an-

other of the articles composing them, have ceased to be regarded as of vital importance, in relation to christian character and belief.

It has, indeed, become quite possible in the opinions of the strictest orthodox minds that a soul may be saved, redeemed from sin, even if the individual does not swear his fixed, unalterable belief in the thirty-nine articles.

In former times, when ministers placed more importance upon a man's belief in a given creed than they did in anything and everything else, the tendency was to grind out christians by rule. All men cannot be expected to think alike upon matters of christian duty and living, any more than they can upon the current topics of the day. They will, if intelligent and capable of thinking for themselves, arrive at personal conclusions, which, though at variance with creed, doctrine, and current belief of former times will nevertheless answer every practical purpose, for a thorough going christian. Fixed rules concerning forms, ceremonies, and ordinances, have fortunately been divested of some of their rigidness and importance.

The growing independence of views, and prevalence of liberalism, and toleration of christian beliefs, constantly tends towards the upbuilding of christianity, and its spreading abroad over the world.

Upon this point, Beecher pertinently remarks when he says: "The supreme conception of manhood, is that of a vital spirit, full of voluntary action, full of unrestrained will, full of thought, flying high as the winds fly, and profuse as the flowers of spring. God's Spirit develops a thousand fold more bountifully from the human, than the sun does from the natural soil, all vines, all shrubs, all high growing trees, moss, everything in its place, and of its kind. Now it is this multifarious spontaneity in man, that constitutes the grandeur of manhood; and it is this spontaneity that men try to repress by institutions, by denominations, by sects, by authority in different forms, hewing off the branches here and there; but liberty is one of the signs of christianity; for by as much as a man is a craven, and trembles before his priest, by so much is he less a christian.

By as much as a man is superstitious about Sundays, about ordinances, about forms and ceremonies, by so much is his christian character weakened."

Now this would not be true, were it true that there was any special christian virtue in worshiping, or adhering strictly to them, or any special spiritual vitality to be thereby derived. Vital christianity is in the spirit, not the letter, in the essence of scriptural truths, and not in their embodiment in set forms, and special ceremonies and observances.

The following declaration of Sir Wm. Pettys, recorded in his will, would not probably have satisfied an orthodox divine of a half a century ago, yet I dare assert that the majority would now concede that it were possible for a man to be a great deal better than a heathen if he lived up to its precepts. These are his words: "As for religion, I die in the profession of that faith, and in the practice of such worship, as I find established by the laws of my country, not being able to believe what I myself please, nor to worship God

better than by doing as I would be done by, observing the laws of my country, and expressing my love and honor unto Almighty God by such signs and tokens as are understood to be such by the people with whom I live, God knowing my heart even without any at all."

Such a creed as this, falling so far short as it does of the old creeds, is yet broad enough, so that if a man faithfully and conscientiously lives up to its principles, he will be a passable christian in this world, and into the world to come.

Swing, in speaking upon the religion of the future, says: "My friends, did you ever think of the dreadful responsibility any one assumes, who insists upon a long formulated creed? You believe the sinner is to be saved by his faith, or by his cordial acceptance of Jesus Christ. If this is so, then every doctrine you add which makes it more difficult for him to come to Christ, the more terrible responsibilty rests upon you and your church. If in order for a soul truly to form a friendship with this Saviour, only two or three doc-

trines are essential, what an injustice to that soul, if your church stands for thirty articles, or one hundred. It is in vain to say that he need not accept of them all, for there they lie between him and the cross, and in some sense he must drag his intellect and conscience over the mass. Every clergyman has felt this, when persons have informed him that they love his Christ, but not his doctrine of election, or his immersion, or his definition of the Trinity. Thus the gate which Christ opened to love, we open only to doctrine. And whereas Christ said, "Lovest thou me?" we say, "acceptest thou all these things?" If Christ is to be a light to lighten every man that cometh into the world, he must be a simple light, so that he can be universal. The religion of the next generation must be such that the scientific man, and the resonable man, and the liberal man, the busy man, the little child, and the professional philosopher, may meet in its sweet light. It is to lighten every man that cometh into the world. It will not dare to be a complex theology, but a friendship for Christ, and a

virtue. Theology will exist, but only as a moral science; a study of God, not a plan of salvation."

Certain fixed principles of belief are doubtless needful to give force and direction to the mind of the person who is seeking to walk in the ways toward the higher life, and as such, all due importance should be awarded them; but there should be no arbitrary rules to control mankind in their search after truth and God.

Robertson wisely remarks, "we reach perfection, not by copying, much less by aiming at originality, but by consistently and steadily working out the life which is common to us all, according to the character which God has given us. There is one universe, in which each separate star differs from another star in glory; one church, in which a single spirit, the life of God, pervades each separate soul, and just in proportion as that life becomes exalted, does it enable it to shine forth in the distinctness of its own individuality, like the stars of heaven."

Swing, in speaking of sects and religious

liberty, says: "The recent growth of religious liberty, and the consequent multiplication of sects, are facts which have rescued christianity from the despotism of any one set of opinions. It is now seen that, under the name of Methodist, or Baptist, or Episcopalian, or Presbyterian, or Congregationalist, the same religion shines forth, and this fact has emptied the old theological debate of its deep meaning, and has silenced the noise by robbing it of all results. In the olden time, when a mortal held some new doctrine about the nature of Christ, or of faith, or of the communion, he was doomed to perdition; there was no hope for any one who varied from the established form. Hence a debate among the theologians invited the idea of heaven, or hell. But in our day, when it is confessed that heaven and hell are not involved in these issues of opinion, the inquisition is robbed of all its significance. This experiment made by the sects, and this discovery that they produce about the same kind of christianity, has joined with the growing culture of the age, in demanding and

producing a greater simplicity of the creed. For if many sects revealed the same kind of christianity, it must be because there are some ideas common to all; ideas so vast, and so influential, that they ride right over the ideas in which the sects differ. Thus the gradual education of society, leading away from the obscure, toward the rational and simple, is joined by the large experiment made by the sects, which experiment in each case points out some one thing which is non-essential.

Permit me to illustrate this idea. Had it not been for the Protestant church, the world might feel to day, that a pope, and a penance, and holy water were essential; but the Protestant church has differentiated those ideas. Were it not for the Roman Church, we might have concluded that there could be no piety away from our forms, but the names of Massilon and Bossuet debar us from that conclusion. Were it not for the Methodists, it might have been supposed that Calvinism was a part of salvation. The world might assume the imperative necessity of immer-

sion, were it not that some sects only sprinkle; and might rely upon the baptism of infants, were there not a grand christian host which wholly excludes that form of religious ceremony. Thus you will perceive that each important sect demonstrates the insignificance of some one dogma, and thus each one aids in driving christianity up to the point of simplicity.

There is a vast amount of dead theology in the world, which has served to hinder the spread of christianity; to repel from, rather than to attract mankind to the truth. Think of the vast amount of sermonizing upon the total depravity of mankind. The clergy used to preach upon this theme at a time when mankind seemingly were not so depraved as they might be; but now we seldom hear a sermon upon that topic, the reason for which may be, that it is patent to every one, that humanity at this time is about as depraved as it is capable of being.

This seemed to have been the opinion of the Scotch divine, who chose for his text a passage in the Psalms: "I said in my haste

all men are liars." "Ay," premised the minister by way of introduction, "Ye said it in your haste, David, did ye? Gin ye had been here, ye micht hae said it at your leisure, my man."

The Scotch divines were famous for rebuking people for their depravities whenever and wherever they were brought to light. As one of them had just risen up in his pulpit to lead the congregation in prayer, a gentleman in front of the gallery took out his handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his brow, forgetting that there was a pack of cards wrapped up in it; the whole pack was scattered over the breast of the gallery. The minister could not resist a sarcasm, solemn as the act was in which he was about to engage: "O man! man! surely your psalm buik has been ill bund."

Think of the tedium of those seventeenthly discourses on the doctrine of predestination, and endless punishment; of the thunderous appeals concerning the moral and divine laws; of those multifarious sermons on the mysterious abstractions of scriptural truth

and doctrine, which one must have been compelled to penetrate with spiritual perception, and accept in the dim light of his trembling faith, ere he could hope to be counted worthy of recognition by, and admission into the society of the saints here on the earth. Behold the poor, miserable, heart broken sinner of a century ago, as he comes seeking Christ and his salvation. What portentous storms of theological doctrine were hurled at him; what thunders of divine law were continually reverberating in his ears; and what lightning flashes of divine wrath were frightening his soul, and blinding his spiritual vision, while engaged in his christian warfare. Between him, the cross, and the Christ he was seeking, were piled up mountain high, the deadwood, underbrush and vague abstractions of theological theorizing, over and through which he must wade, assenting to what he could understand, and without reservation, mentally and spiritually swallowing the rest, as he would an unpalatable drug, hoping for good results, before he could hope to behold

Christ in faith, and receive his favor and forgiveness.

In speaking of the gospel of atheism, a distinguished writer says: "the atrocious evils of persecution and asceticism, the degradations of hoary superstition, the maddening terrors of the pit, these are the only things on which atheists fix their eyes, in the religions of the past, and they justly glory in their inevitable termination. But none of these could have endured for a day, were they not bound up with good and true things, which human nature needed. Down far below all priestcraft, have lain, and forever must lie, wants and aspirations, cravings for a supreme love, an eternal harmony with the Holy Spirit throned with us; and when superstition dies out at last in the day light of science, these spiritual hungers and thirsts will remain. To believe that justice rules in the universe, and that wrong and evil will not finally triumph, has been the ultimate reliance of the noblest souls. To give it up, to believe that neither here, nor hereafter, shall the wrongs of earth

be set right, is a sacrifice of something far higher than any personal hope. To abandon the trust that there is in the universe one being absolutely worthy of our adoring homage, and that it is possible to glorify this dim mortal life by living in the light of his love, that also is a loss beyond all measure, the everlasting eclipse of the sun of the soul.

Swing, in speaking of the ministry's true call, the need of humanity, says: "God works in and through society; and as we say that society demanded and created the office of lawyer, and poet, and naturalist, so we feel that society demands the pulpit, and has created it, and endowed it by its longings and toils. Out of life's casuistry, out of its sorrows and sins, out of the great mystery of death, out of its dream of an immortal life, has grown up the sacred office, a plant watered by two kinds of tears, those of sorrow and of joy, and with roots spreading to two worlds.

Instead, therefore, of referring its claim to a falling open of the bible, or to a recovery

from sickness, how gladly should the pulpit refer to mankind for its warrant, and move along upon the never changing basis of the world's common sense. Happy is that minister who can sit down with the naturalist, the statesman, the engineer, the farmer and poet, and feel that mankind has ordered the whole group with the same sweet but resistless voice. It is well that upon the head of the Episcopal candidate the hands of the bishop must rest, and that the Presbyterian licentiate must be sent forth by the laying on of hands of the presbytery. The methods are a guard, and a solemnity. But there is a grander laying on of hands than this. There is a solemnity of which this bishop scene or presbyterial scene is but a faint shadow. Society, in all its moral depths and heights; society, in its entanglements of mystery; society, sweeping along to the grave; society, trying to penetrate the cloud covered future, has reached out its two hands in holy prayer, and has rested them upon the servant of God as never rested the palm of bishop, or any of the children of mortality.

It was not any laying on of sectarian hands that made poetry an art. It was the wants of the human race. And so it is not the bishop, nor a conference, nor a presbytery, that stands back of the pulpit. It is the nature of the world, of man, here and hereafter."

Now that the gordian knot which so long bound the various religious denominations to a separate and seemingly unalterable formula of christian doctrine and belief, and which held fast the metes and bounds of religious intercourse between them, and set up barriers over which they severally could not pass, has at last been so nearly severed, let the pulpit take in the length, breadth and grandeur of its opportunities, its true mission; and let it behold with unclouded clearness, and with the keenness of spiritual vision, that emancipation from these bonds, and the inauguration of the era of freedom and liberty of thought and belief, touching all matters pertaining to vital christianity; let it behold that these changes which time has wrought, these revelations which the

revolving years have disclosed, point out the way which, if followed out with untiring devotion, unswerving fidelity to the cause of truth, righteousness, and the Master, will soonest reach that crowning day, when christianity shall have shown its powers, and accomplished its mission, and when the millenial day shall be ushered in, in all its glory.

Let the pulpit stand fast then by all the essential truths and doctrines which the bible inculcates in its teachings, but let it away with all non-essentials, all the machinery of belief of man's devising, and let it remember that everything which is not actually essential to christian life and development, is an actual hindrance. It will be a stone in the would-be believer's path, over which he will stumble, and fracture his faith; a post in his way, which he will run against in his spiritual darkness, and receive such a shock as will terminate perhaps in spiritual paralysis; a ministerial drug, given to stimulate the sin sick soul to newness of life and cause it to grow in grace, and up into the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus,

but which acts as a poison upon his soul, destroys its christian vitality, and the person dies, contending with these forces of evil.

Ministers in former times appealed so much to the fear of mankind, dwelt so extensively and constantly upon the terrors of the divine law, that they made the whole subject of religion unattractive, and distasteful to many, who saw, and felt, that in love there was a power, which if it were oftener appealed to in men, and held up as the grandest attraction to draw sinners away from evil, into the light and knowledge of the Supreme Love, it would be the greatest stimulant and incentive to christian living, by virtue of its own attraction.

Robertson says: "you may coerce the conscience, you may control men's belief, and you may produce a unity by so doing; but it is the unity of pebbles on the sea shore—a lifeless identity of outward form, with no cohesion between the parts—a dead sea beach, on which nothing grows, and where the very seaweed dies."

By seeking to terrify their hearers, the

former ministers were appealing to the baser attributes of human nature, and character, to the neglect of the far higher, and nobler attribute of love, which, to a greater or less degree, attracts all mankind. If God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son to die to redeem it; and Christ, through his love for the race, was obedient unto death, why hide him and his love manifested unto the world, behind those portentous clouds of fearful terrors? Was he thus to be lifted up to draw all men unto him? Mankind never were attracted by fear, but rather compelled by it; but voluntary action, belief, and acceptance on their part, is more in accordance with the highest and noblest teaching and revelations of God to men.

So long as religion is unattractive to many, in, and of itself, as an abstract reality, everything should be done that can reasonably be, to make it as attractive to the masses as possible, and to divest it of all elements which have a tendency to repel men.

Christ's whole ministry here on the earth, exemplified the power of love over men, and

it was his tender ministrations of love and sympathy, that caused the people to come unto him for relief from physical maladies, as well as their spiritual infirmities. Seldom did he try to frighten those about him into belief and trust in him, but mankind were constrained by the power of his love for them, while he was with them; and it is this identical power which is to consummate the final redemption of the world unto himself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE deadening influence of formalism in church exercises should, so far as consistent, be done away with, for as a matter of fact it is tedious and disheartening to the masses.

For instance, the exercises in most of our churches preliminary to the sermon, are almost the same, year in and year out, which are often of such length as to fatigue the audience, and exhaust its energies, so that the people have little ambition to listen to the discourse to follow, however good it may be. Some ministers will read two or three long chapters from the bible, give out correspondingly long hymns to be sung, and then will utter prayers, particularly the one before the sermon, of such length as to cause

the most enduring patience to peter out. It really seems as though they were praying against time, and it is often wonderful how many subjects for prayer they will gather together during the progress of their seemingly never ending petitions.

They frequently scour the whole world in the framing of one petition, excluding nobody nor anything. This practice was well illustrated by a matter-of-fact preacher in the north of Scotland, who, in returning thanks in his prayers one Sabbath for the excellent harvest, began as usual, "O Lord, we thank Thee," &c., and went on to mention its abundance, and its safe in-gathering, but feeling anxious to be quite candid and scrupulously truthful, added, "all éxcept a few fields between here and Stonehaven, not worth mentioning."

In speaking of praying in public, Dr. Alexander says: "I would rather have one good form of prayer than many bad ones. If we are not to have a form we ought to cultivate simplicity in our prayers. Let him who prays in public forget traditionary and

customary forms. Let him endeavor to express his desires in the briefest and simplest phrases. One growing fault in public prayer, especially among our young preachers, is a fatiguing and unnatural circumlocution of expression. This appears to arise partly from a fear that the prayer will not be long enough, a very groundless apprehension, as we all know by experience. From the same cause, together with a want of fluency in thought and speech, arises the unpleasant and growing practice of repeating the address to God, by name, with needless frequency. This, besides other bad effects, impairs the reverential feeling both of him who leads the prayer and those who follow him. The chasms occasioned by embarrassment or hesitancy might be filled with anything more properly than with the awful name of God."

It quite frequently happens that after the long prayers and the already tedious routine of exercises, there are several notices to be read and commented upon, and a contribution to be taken up. Happily the sermons

are not always proportionately lengthy, either for want of time or a disposition to make them so.

Charity sermons are, generally speaking, altogether too long for the results they hope to accomplish who preach them. It frequently seems as though ministers who preach for benevolent objects thought that the longer they preached the more they would get; but it is a doubtful rule, and the reverse, I dare say, is generally true, as was the case recorded of Dean Swift, who once preached a charity sermon the length of which disgusted his hearers, which coming to his knowledge, and it falling to his lot soon after to preach another sermon of the like kind, in the same place, he took special pains to avoid falling into the former error. His text was, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay him again." Swift, after repeating the text in a more than usual emphatic tone, added, "Now, my beloved brethren, you hear the terms of this loan; if you like the security, down with your dust!" The quaint-

ness and brevity of the sermon produced a very large contribution.

Ministers need to possess the faculty of reading human nature, and of comprehending the wants of those they minister unto. A writer in speaking of preachers who shoot wide of the mark, says, "a great many preachers in christian communities seem always to have before their mind's eye a company of heathen. Sunday after Sunday, they go on expounding the most elementary truths of the gospel. They tell their hearers that they are sinners, that Christ died to save them, and appeal to them to accept him. They praise the bible as the best of books, and extol christianity as a divine system. Perhaps nothing could be better, if it were addressed to people ignorant of these things. But the preacher's congregation drank them in almost with their mothers' milk. They no more question the excellence of the christian religion than the necessity for food and drink. They have no doubt that in a general way they are sinners, though they may have very vague ideas as to what their particular sins

are, and still dimmer notions as to how really to get rid of them.

Other ministers deal much with an imaginary congregation of infidels. They argue and declaim against the errors of Strauss, and Renan, and Colenso. They have constantly present to their imagination a host of skeptics who must be convinced, so they turn their pulpits into a battery. The great guns boom away against materialism and rationalism. And the good folks who sit quietly listening, and who hardly ever hear of infidelity except on Sunday—mothers of families, and hard working business men and mechanics, and people absorbed in the practical cares of life—get a sense that the devil is being handsomely pommeled by their eloquent minister, and rejoice in his discomfiture. But for their own individual contests with the adversary they get little assistance.

No greater mistake is possible to a minister than to misunderstand the wants of those with whom he has to deal. That he preaches the truth will not save him from utter failure, unless he preaches that truth which his hear-

ers need. If a doctor misunderstands his patients' symptoms and gives the wrong medicine, it does not mend the matter at all that the medicine is good of its kind. The requirements of men's spiritual natures are as various and as individual as those of their bodies."

True it is, as this writer says, that many preachers shoot wide of the mark; but he should have added that there are those in every congregation who *hear* quite as wide of the mark, and they have ears to hear to suit themselves, and not at all according to the preacher's intent.

In speaking of preaching, Ruskin says, "there are two ways of regarding a sermon, either as a human composition or a divine message. If we look upon it entirely as the first, and require our clergymen to finish it with their utmost care and learning, for our better delight, whether of ear or intellect, we shall be necessarily led to expect much formality and stateliness in its delivery, and to think that all is not well if the pulpit have not a golden fringe around it, and a goodly

cushion in front of it; but we shall at the same time consider the treatise thus prepared as something to which it is our duty to listen, without restlessness for half an hour, or three-quarters of an hour, but which, when that duty has been decorously performed, we may dismiss from our minds, in happy confidence of being provided with another, when next it shall be necessary. But if once we begin to regard the preacher, whatever his faults, as a man sent with a message to us, which it is a matter of life or death whether we hear or refuse; if we look upon him as set in charge over many spirits in danger of ruin, and having allowed to him but an hour or two in seven days to speak to them; if we make some endeavor to conceive how precious these hours ought to be to him, a small vantage on the side of God, after his flock have been exposed for six days together to the full weight of the world's temptation, and he has been forced to watch the thorn and the thistle springing in their hearts, and to see what wheat had been scattered from the way side by this wild bird and

the other; and at last, when breathless and weary with the week's labor, they give him this interval of imperfect and languid hearing, he has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try, by this way and that, to stir the hard fastenings of those doors where the Master has stood and knocked, yet none opened, and to call at the openings of those dark streets where Wisdom herself hath stretched forth her hands, and no man regarded,—thirty minutes to raise the dead in,—let us but once understand and feel this, and we shall look with changed eyes upon that frippery of gay furniture about the place from which the message of judgment must be delivered, which either breathes upon the dry bones that they may live, or, if ineffectual, remains recorded in condemnation, perhaps against the utterer and listener alike, but assuredly against one of them."

Having considered the subject of preaching and praying in church exercises, let us take up

the subject of music. The music in many of our churches is not particularly soul inspiring, and does not greatly conduce to melody-making in the hearts of the worshipers. It has been said that "Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast," but unfortunately for us, the music where we happen to worship is better calculated to make savages of those who listen to it, and the same is true of the music in many other churches in our vicinity. In many churches the music is no doubt called artistic, and no doubt is rendered *secundem artem*, but it nevertheless grates often times in our ears. The singing for dramatic effect, and the cuckoo style of singing, which is often heard in our churches, is not any too well adapted to church music. Singing should be plain enough so that the words can be distinguished by the congregation. The good, old fashioned hymns and tunes were far better, and really more inspiring, than is much of the artistic music of to-day. Lively music is not objectionable; good chanting makes excellent music, and animated airs, if even somewhat operatic, do

not sound bad. There are many people who are blue, fastidious, over nice, in every congregation, who seem to think that lively music in church of a Sunday is sacreligious. But how was it in David's time, when they were forever chanting hymns and psalms of praise? They did not in those days believe in slow, doleful music, as if everybody was about to march down to the tombs and give up the ghost. Lively, inspiriting music, at the same time letting the words be distinctly and clearly enunciated, is the style of music which the majority are quite willing to listen to.

Music in churches is a far too frequent source of discord and strife in them, and frequently it arises from the fact that members of the congregation are given the management of choirs, and all the affairs pertaining to church music, who have no natural or acquired taste for music, and no adequate conception of what is demanded, and who cannot enter fully into the wants and spirit of this department of public worship. Old men, with silvery white hairs and dimness of

vision, had better graduate from church choirs, and especially cease to lead them.

Music is a costly luxury to our churches now-a-days, but there was a time when music was furnished by volunteers from the congregations, which was really better than much of that which now commands a liberal salary. Musicians, as a class or profession, are exceedingly sensitive, jealous, and with truth I think I may say, that they, taken collectively, sadly lack sound, practical common-sense and sober intelligence, and even the attributes of a good moral character. There are some excellent exceptions to which this general rule will not apply, and hence such ones need not take any exceptions against this statement.

There is a great variety of tastes regarding music, as there is concerning other things, and it is next to impossible for any choir to suit every one, and therefore unreasonable demands are sometimes made upon those who furnish music for the church. The greater the variety of music, other things being equal, the more general will be the satisfac-

tion. Let there be less formalism in church exercises, and more variety, and the more will be attracted to listen to them, and receive benefit from so doing.

The business transactions of the churches are frequently conducted in a manner which would throw discredit upon a city political caucus. How often, when some important matter comes up for decision, as the selection of a pastor, building of a church, or any enterprise connected with the vital welfare of the christian organization, names are brought in either on written or printed slips, which were selected and agreed upon by some few, who had made all needful previous arrangements to have their man or men chosen, or their pet scheme adopted, and thus springing their trap upon the rest, who have not been let into the secret proceedings, in season to express their difference of opinion.

There is a great deal of this underhand work going on in the churches, which has ever been a fruitful source of discord and quarrel, which has resulted and always will, so long as practised, in gross injustice to some

parties. The management of church affairs is very frequently put into the hands of men who have money, and by virtue of wealth, hold a social position far beyond any merit of theirs, and exert an influence which talent and genuine ability may never hope to obtain. Such men frequently run the machinery of churches, to their ruin.

But a small proportion of every church congregation ever become members of parishes, and as in most cases only the members of parishes, and those enrolled as church members, have any voice in the selection of pastor, choir, or church building, it naturally results that quite a proportion of the congregations attending the churches have no opportunity to express their opinions, no voice in any of these important matters, and the inevitable consequence is, that great dissatisfaction soon manifests itself, so that finally, if their voice at first was not heard, their influence is at last felt, and by the trouble they frequently give rise to, they bring about an inevitable disruption and rebellion.

As every member of the congregation who

is a regular attendant, is expected to contribute to the support of the church, and the liquidation of the church debts, so should every one, whether he or she belongs to the church or parish, have a voice, and a vote, upon all matters pertaining to the government and welfare of the church.

Taxation without representation in church, works injustice, the same as it does in matters of state. It works injustice in either case, and should never be tolerated. So it is that a minority rules in many of our churches, and so it is, that the majority so frequently assert their rights, and either bring the minority to terms, or else secede, withhold their patronage, or destroy the power of the church for doing good and accomplishing its plans. Let the majority of the congregation have part and lot in all church undertakings, and by their decision, the church shall stand against the opposition of the minority. Let everything be done openly and above board. No secret conclaves, no shrewd caucusing, no trickery of any kind, should be tolerated in any church transactions.

The officials of our churches may lay their plans ever so quietly and cunningly, just according to their own peculiar ideas and positive notions, but they cannot compel the majority to believe always as they do, provided they have different sentiments, and hold different views concerning the questions at issue. A little more honesty, and plain, practical common sense is needed to be exercised by you, ye official gentlemen of the churches, and will you not, can you not, see it?

Having taken the clergy and the official representatives of the churches to task for their evil deeds, general remissness and short comings in duty, let us talk to the people in general, who compose the average church congregation, and attempt to portray the characteristics of the different classes.

In the first place, we will raise this question: Do you suppose that it is within the power of any minister living, to please all, everybody? Neither gods nor men ever did, or ever will. It is one of the things that is absolutely impossible, and the sooner you find

it out, the better for you, the minister, and the church at large. Many men are creatures of circumstance, governed by momentary impulses, and are drifted here and there by the varying opinions of men, so that one never knows what tack to take in dealing with them, or where to find them.

The remark of the sailor is very applicable to them. A clergyman being called to preach to an audience of seafaring men, embellished his discourse with several nautical tropes and figures. Amongst other things, he advised them to "be ever on the watch, so that on whatsoever tack the evil one should bear down upon them, he might be crippled in action." "Aye, master," muttered a jolly son of Neptune, "but let me tell you that will depend upon your having the weather gauge of him." If a minister could only keep a perfect weather guage of all his congregation, he might possibly adapt himself and his teachings to them and their circumstances, so as to please far more of them. There are those who are drifted about on waves of religious excitement, religious drift-

wood, and it requires tact on the part of the minister in dealing with this class, in order that he may win them from the evil which is in the world, and far more tact is required to keep them from returning to it. It is a difficult task to take and keep the spiritual gauge of such people.

Other men there are who are reached by appealing to their intellects, and they are often so proud of their own intelligence that they frequently lack the good sense to apply the truth to their own cases, for which it was directly intended. A minister may edify them, but to quicken them in spirit, and into newness of spiritual life, is often almost an impossible undertaking.

There is a class who have but a little intelligence to appeal to, and they are always the most troublesome people to deal with; for in their own estimation they know it all, and are endowed with consummate wisdom. It is indeed surprising how much soul satisfaction these weak, flabby-minded, unintelligent ones do secure unto themselves, through the

belief in their self-conscious power. A minister in seeking to dislodge these benighted ones from the fortified positions in which their erroneous views have placed them, needs to have granted unto him supernatural powers; for let him send home to their hearts shafts of divine, indisputable truths, such as a reasonable man would not think of gainsaying or resisting, and they would produce no more telling effect upon them than leaden shot on the heavy plates of an iron clad monitor. Hopeless ignorance is their rock of refuge and defense, and intelligence is fruitlessly applied as the remedy. Ignorance and superstition being their natural mental and spiritual pabulum, it would seem sometimes that it were better to let them alone, to remain joined unto their idols.

Then come the moral men, whose good works go farther in their own estimation towards their final redemption, than all things else. Though their sins mount up to heaven, a few paltry good deeds of theirs will atone for their gigantic evils. A minister may

preach at these people, but as for preaching any truth into their hearts in an effectual manner, he might as well preach to a cyclone, hoping thereby to arrest it in its destructive course, unless some power other than human accompanies his words with spirit and power. These people are the devil's armor bearers, and the contest between these forces of evil and good must be aggressive and persistent.

In almost every church congregation there are to be found a few men, and quite possibly a few old women, whose whole sphere of actual work in the churches seems to be to hunt up some petty heresy, pick some flaw with the pastors, pretend to some real or imaginary grievance, or to enlarge upon the doings of the church officials. They are really, I suppose, the devil's spies, which he has, all unconsciously to themselves, chosen as the ones who are best calculated to do him and his cause most efficient service. As a class, they are proverbial for their devotion and faithfulness to their leader, who thus sits in darkness. If they were one half as earnest

in really doing good as they are to point out the evil which in their opinion exists in others, the day of the world's redemption might be greatly hastened.

There are many people to whom a pastor directs his discourse, that are forever misapplying the truth, or hearing for others' benefit instead of their own, as was the case with an old miser, who after listening to an eloquent sermon upon the subject of charity, remarked, "that sermon so strongly proves the necessity of alms-giving, that I am almost a mind to beg."

Some people there are who hold peculiar views concerning the scripture declarations, and they are not satisfied unless a pastor's views harmonize with their own. Others attend church, whose principal object appears to be to gather food for criticism, ignoring all the power for good in what they have heard.

Why, for a minister to suit all these classes of people, he would need to be an intellectual gymnast, a spiritual contortionist, in order to so change and shape his words and deeds as

to meet these various demands; a ministerial clown, who could change his tactics and resort to trickery, and so ministerially and spiritually adjust himself to his clamorous crowd.

CHAPTER V.

THE pleasant relationships and social amenities of common life go far towards making up the sum of its happiness, and the same is true of the social relations of people constituting various religious bodies. The success, growth, and oftentimes the very existence of religious societies, depends upon the cultivation and practical use of the social element.

At all times, and under all circumstances, it is natural for mankind to crave friendship, sympathy and recognition. Different circumstances call for different kinds or degrees of friendship, or different manifestations of it. In prosperity, doubtful friends may be endurable, but in adverse fortune there must be

no discounting of the trust, confidence, abiding firmness and steadfastness of one's friends. One has well said, "a sure friend is best known in adverse state. We know not whom to trust till after trial. There are some who will keep us company while it is clear and fair, who will be gone when the clouds gather." They are the kind of friendly recruits who run from friendship's battle at the first sound of alarm, or the first appearance of smoke. They are noted for their consummate courage in sunshine, as they are for their contemptible cowardice in stormy times.

It is the nature of men, and more emphatically of women, to desire confidants to whom they can come and unmask themselves—unfold the secret agonies of their hearts, when they seem to be overburdened. It was the case when Christ was on the earth, and hence tales of evil and anguish of heart were continually being poured into his ears, that consolation might be granted the petitioners. The friendship and sympathy of Christ was sought by all classes, because it was to be

depended upon, which, alas! is seldom true concerning the most trustworthy now. The social relationship between pastor and people is always more or less precarious, by virtue of the peculiar demands consequent upon it. Women having overmuch trust and confidence in the clergy, they are more or less idolatrous in their faith in and devotion to them, and they will confess to them, very much as the heathen do to their gods. They bring their confidential troubles and infelicities, religious, domestic and social, before them, very much as a true Catholic would confess to her priest. Domestic evils, which need to be dealt with with as much caution as fatal poisons, are poured into the ears of ministers, who perchance may not prove to be the best confidants in the world, and it not unfrequently happens that they are unsafe persons to reveal one's family secrets to. However much it may have been doubted in former times, it somehow or other has come to be pretty generally understood that even the clergy are not all saints; but the over trusting and confiding mind of woman has

seemed sometimes to have overlooked this fact. A minister is human, like the rest of mankind, subject to temptation like the rest of us, and he may be so overcome by a woman's recital of her peculiar trials as to become the one deepest involved in the social and domestic mælstroms, which fact persons should consider before making too exciting revelations to him.

It is not at all strange that ministers are thus led unwittingly into discomfiture and false relations, not foreseeing the construction that may unjustly and unwisely be placed upon their sympathetic demonstrations and charitable efforts.

Taking everything into consideration, ministers, though their calling may be of God, they are not all gods by any means; have not the power to forgive sins, domestic or otherwise, and hence no great good can come from unburdening one's soul to them in a sweeping confession of its secret agonies.

People should have some compassion on the clergy, for how many of them are crushed down with the same weaknesses of passion,

infirmities of mind and body, social disturbances, and infelicities of infamous friendships. Ministers may be the best possible mediators between woman and her God, but it is to be greatly doubted whether they are the wisest mediators between woman and her husband. Such ministrations are as often productive of evil as of good. Such confessions, of man or woman, do not lead to domestic salvation, or restoration of family happiness.

What a delightful revelation it must be to a sensitive man or woman, to find, after an open, frank, unrestrained statement of all the rough, soul-harrassing inharmonies, perplexities, domestic turmoils and incompatibilities of life has been made in full confidence, that the precious confidant has been drawn thereby into a deeper vortex of kindred evils, taking his dear, confiding friends with him.

There are in every pastoral flock men and women who are impulsive, of sensitive natures, but not of sensible minds, who rush, all gushing over with tales of evil to their pastor, who they seem to think can deliver them out of all their distresses; and woe

betide the pastor who does not afford them some attention and consolation. The really deserving, sensible, suffering people, are the ones who generally are inclined to bear their own burdens, and so it is that those who have really the least burden to bear, the smallest ground for complaint, the weakest demand for sympathy, are universally the ones who bore a pastor to death with their constant demands, never ending rehearsals of fault finding, and evils real or imaginary, mostly the latter. As a minister stands as the sole arbiter between man and wife, friend and foe, feuds of an unwarrantable nature not unfrequently result.

People who are everlastingly running to their minister with pitiable tales which are a bore to him, unpleasantly reminding him of the number of vixens and manifold devils over which he has been placed as shepherd, will do well to heed the advice of one who says: "Let not your tongue run before reason bid it go; if the heart does not premeditate, the tongue must necessarily precipitate."

Then there are people who are always

aching to pry into church and family affairs, inquisitive people, whom one has well described as funnels of conversation, who do not take in anything for their own use, but merely to pass it to others. These two illustrations will not perhaps very inappropriately apply to an occasional woman in every minister's flock. We do not pretend to say that women are alone to blame. While men cannot begin to compete with women in tonguey efforts, when a man opens his mouth to speak words of strife, he can, and often does, do more lasting injury in a few sullen, saucy words, than a house full of women would, in talking a continual stream from sunrise to sunset.

Both ministers and people need to possess a knowledge of men, and be able to read people at sight. If phrenology has no foundation as a science, physiognomy reveals much of the true type of men and women. There are some people who by their vacant expression show plainly they are a nonentity. Gold and precious jewels are always found buried beneath the surface, and much labor

and skilled research is often needed in order to find them out; and so it is with the really most worthy, intelligent people, whose character and excellencies need to be studied in order to be properly appreciated. Herein the people have the advantage over the minister, for while they have only one man, the pastor, to study, and find out what there is in him, he has to study to find out the mental, social and religious caliber of five or six hundred, more or less. Just here the people often make unjust demands upon the clergy. How frequently it takes a single family several months to return a half dozen social calls. What an irksome and really serious undertaking it seems to them. It is not that it is such an enormous task when really undertaken, but there are so many things which unexpectedly hinder, and stand in the way, making it really quite difficult to discharge such trifling social obligations. A minister, however, is expected to call upon his several hundred parishioners several times, it may be, in the course of the year, in addition to all his other duties, which so constantly demand his

time and attention. If it is such hard work for a parishioner to make a half dozen calls, what must it be for a pastor to make as many hundred? A close observation will disclose the fact that the world abounds with fools, who are too dull to see that a rule ever admits of more than one application, and knaves who would not allow of more than one, selfish application, however forcibly they might be convinced of the propriety and justice of others.

The compound character is the most common, and the one with whom the pastor will have most to deal, and it behooves him to realize that these complex characters are capable of putting on two fronts, being double minded, concerning which the proverb saith, "they are unstable in all their ways." As he who knows how to put proper words in proper places evinces the truest knowledge of books, so he who knows how to fit persons in fit places evinces the truest knowledge of men. There is a constant demand, however, for the exercise of charity, and one has well said that "did universal charity prevail,

earth would be a heaven, and hell a fable." In the confidential and social relations between pastor and people, mere rumors and vague whisperings, having no foundation in fact, are frequently bruited about as positive truths. To such gossipers there should be no charity.

In speaking of falsehood, a writer says: "It, like a drawing in perspective, will not bear to be examined in every point of view, because it is a good imitation of truth, as a perspective is in reality only of one. But truth, like that reality of which the perspective is the representative, will bear to be scrutinized in all points of view, and though examined under every situation is one and the same."

These untruthful busy bodies that infest religious societies are an intolerable nuisance, or at least we should judge they would be to a pastor, for whom we presume to speak, not having had the honor of serving the people in that capacity ourselves. They are never satisfied unless some topic of doubtful issue, which they can speculate about, is continu-

ally open for discussion, or unless somebody has done something, or failed to do something, which can afford them food for gossip. It is amazing how such people do glory in strife. Their souls seem to delight themselves in the fatness which they gather in their congenial warfare.

There are narrow souled people, who as one has well said, "are like narrow necked bottles, the less they have in them the more noise they make in pouring it out." They are always uneasy, running over with words, and divers complaints. They are like the pent up fountains of carbonic gas; the moment the least vent is given them, they gush, foam and fizzle until they are completely exhausted, which takes but a little while. They keep pastor and people in a continual turmoil, for not being able to live at peace with themselves, there is no peace for others where they are.

Some people make grievous complaints because their pastor does not show them just as much or a little more attention than he does some one or more members of his con-

gregation. They never for a moment stop to consider that a minister has likes and dislikes, as do other people. It is not at all strange that a minister should select those whom he would have to be his boon companions, and he is pardonable if he does this. There are those in every congregation who by their intrinsic beauty of life and character cannot but call forth the pastor's admiration, as they do the admiration of others.

And with the ministers, as with others, there are some in every church who are so unattractive in person, life and character, that saint or sinner could not express any very marked respect for. True, Christ was no respecter of persons during his ministry on the earth, but it is asking too much of the clergy not to be so in these later days. The laws of attraction and repulsion have their forcible application in the social world, as they do in the realms of chemical and philosophical forces, and their results are frequently quite as positive and negative.

It frequently proves unfortunate for a minister to have had any too warm and confid-

ing friends in his congregation, for such persons are liable to become aggrieved at some trifling offense, and then they are apt to abuse their mutual friendship by taking unjust advantage of the knowledge of a confidential character resulting from the acquaintance. Hence we see the necessity of caution on the part of pastor and people in all their social relations. Ministers must be left to act independently in these matters, in order that they may not be needlessly trammelled by the conventionalities of society, and the unjust and exorbitant demands made upon their time, patience and temper.

We do not hold that a pastor should ignore any one, not even the humblest of his charge, but we do hold it as absurd that he should have or express the same regard for one as for another. He should have a word for all, remembering that "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

How often it is the case that an excellent minister is sacrificed on account of some petty personal grievance of two or three members of his church. Perhaps it may

have been simply a social grievance; perhaps he may have preached truths which had too direct an application; or perhaps he, the pastor, might have differed from them in the matter of opinions and methods. It is time for the people to realize the fact that a minister is not settled over the church simply to fill a social position, to follow out the bent of everybody's inclination, and to gratify individual whims, to the utter disregard of his own better sense and judgment.

A minister's business is to discover men's sins, and preach the truth to all mankind, without fear or favor, and when men take serious exceptions to the declarations of truth, it generally happens to be the case that they stood in need of its forcible and thorough application.

Nearly every church has its own social characteristics and peculiarities. Many of them are divided up into social sets or cliques, from which the rest are practically excluded. They constitute just so many social centres, and are not very much unlike so many secret societies, requiring certain qualifications, and

conformity to special rules, in order to be admitted into their several sacred precincts. Owing to these social divisions and barriers, and to the fact that some churches are so unsocial that the regular attendants do not hardly recognize each other, strangers frequently worship therein for a year or more without even as much as being recognized, not to say spoken to, or invited to participate in any social interviews, or join any of their social gatherings. We personally know of repeated instances where in times of special interest in churches, young people of a modest, retiring disposition, who attended some of their stated and special meetings, hoping some one would perchance open their mouths, and unseal their lips to them, and by speaking a word of encouragement, manifesting for them a feeling of regard and christian sympathy, and thereby encourage them in the way of all the higher and nobler aspirations of life; but the people did not, so they went their own way, deeming the pleasures of the world better than those to be derived from being a religious recluse. We have

been in churches ourselves, and noticed the social ostracism crop out here and there, which in many instances was but little better than a direct insult to strangers. If Heaven is to be such an unsocial place, as many of the churches are, we should fail to see where the happiness would come in.

There is a vast deal of affectation entering into all our social entertainments, which is a poor substitute for pure, plain, practical civility in word, deed, and general bearing of individuals. The highest and noblest type of a gentleman or lady, be they christians or not, is the one wherein they can and do adapt themselves to all classes, having a word of good cheer, a look of recognition, and a bearing of civility toward all, whatever their lot or station in life may be. Take these men and women who set themselves up as gods in society, to be worshiped and bowed down to, who think it far beneath their dignity to recognize an individual in the common walks of life, and turn them over to Darwin, for we will not dispute the theory that their ancestry

may be readily and distinctly traced back to the lower order of animals.

Other things being equal, when pastor and people mingle together a good deal, and in social accord, there will be more life and christian growth manifested.

The general good demands that all should labor for its advancement. The savage tribes teach the civilized nations useful lessons regarding social worship. Everything is in common, and in their religious ceremonies they find their chief social pleasures and peculiar enjoyments. Nature teaches us that the laws of harmony and unity should prevail, and of Nature in this connection Pope thus speaks:

"See plastic Nature working to this end,
The single atoms each to others tend,
Attract, attracted to, the next in place,
Form'd and impell'd its neighbor to embrace;
See matter next with various life endued,
Press to one center still, the general good."
"God, working ever on a social plan,
By various ties attaches man to man,
He made at first, though free and unconfined,
One man the common father of the kind,
That every tribe, though placed as he sees best,

Where seas or deserts part them from the rest,
Differing in language, manner or in face,
Might feel themselves allied to all the race."

Some there are who take special pains to become socially identified with the church from purely speculative motives. Their whole aim being to receive profit, they are of no help whatever to any church, but rather a curse; for so long as everything moves quietly along to their advantage they are serene and peaceable, but when their private interests are assailed or crippled, they are the first ones to create discord and troubles. Those who thus prostitute their church relations and interests to selfish and mercenary ends, are the hypocritical ones who cast dishonor upon the cause, for the welfare of which they pretend to labor. They are the ones who most frequently are inclined to boast of their christian attainments, and the ones to whom the words of Cowper are appropriately addressed:

"Behold a Christian! and without the fires
The founder of that name alone inspires,
Though all accomplishment, all knowledge meet,
To make the shining prodigy complete,
Whoever boasts that name, behold a cheat."

The evening prayer meetings are styled meetings for "social worship," and here these same religious schemers will be found, praying with fervor and devoutness such as would eclipse the best efforts of any genuine saint, and thus they whet their swords, with which to financially shave their fellow men on the following day. It is a lamentable fact perhaps, but it is nevertheless true.

Prayer meetings in most Orthodox churches are quite inappropriately named social meetings. The prayer meetings of the Baptists and Methodists are altogether more free and social than those of any other religious sects, and with some degree of propriety their worship may be said to be social. But how dead the silence that reigns throughout an Orthodox prayer meeting! How much like a party of mourners they sit, waiting for funeral obsequies to take place, or as those who sit dumbfounded waiting for deliverance, and a pleasant deliverance it doubtless is for most of them when the meeting ends. Such sleepy, dry, dead worship is not calculated

to fire the hearts of the best worshipers with religious enthusiasm.

If a half-dozen persons are to take part in a prayer meeting, it would be far better if one would immediately follow the other, in a five minute prayer or exhortation, and get through in a half hour, than to be an hour about it, using up the extra half hour in tedious waiting and irksome silence.

If evening prayer meetings held among the churches were what they are styled, social, instead of the unsocial, dreary things that they are, much more good would they work out.

We believe that Heaven will be a social place, where one saint will be as good as another, at least no invidious distinctions will be made, to conflict with the happiness of the others. Christians in our churches are not all perfect, neither do we expect they can or will be; but they can come nearer to it than they now do, without making any very great exertion either. Christians may do and be what they please, Christianity remains the same. That is impregnable.

Scientists may gather together in social conclave and declare that Christianity is a system of theology that will fail, while science rests on an enduring foundation, but they may see the time when they will be convinced that Christ, the Founder of Christianity, has built upon a sure foundation, however much it may seem to conflict with laws of science.

Mankind may declare that Geology teaches things contrary to scriptural declarations, yet God, the author of all, is greater than the sum of all sciences, and when all that science can boast of shall vanish away like smoke, the kingdom which Christ and Christianity have built up and perfected, will reign supreme.

"Hear the just law—the judgment of the skies!
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies;
And he that *will* be cheated to the last,
Delusions strong as Hell shall bind him fast."

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